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ABSTRACT

According to the author of this report, it is increasingly evident that teachers, through their unions and the bargaining process, are becoming more involved in the everyday decisionmaking process and policy development of school districts. A better understanding of the factors that influence union members' perceptions of union leadership effectiveness may provide insight into the factors that influence the school district decisionmaking process. Following a review of the literature on the relationships between union structure, union leadership, and member attitudes toward the union and its leaders, the author proposes a theoretical model for analyzing these relationships within teacher unions. According to the model, union members' perceptions of the effectiveness of union leadership are influenced by their perceptions of three endogenous variables--the contract, the union leadership's management of conflict, and the union's tactical effectiveness--as seen in the contexts of two exogenous variables--the union's organizational characteristics and the school district's economic, political, and demographic characteristics. An extensive bibliography concludes the document. (Author/PGD)

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The Effect of the Collective Bargaining Process on Rank-and-File's Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness: A Theoretical Model

Gregory W. Castle

EA 015 113

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The Effect of the Collective Bargaining Process on Rank-and-File's Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness: A Theoretical Model

Introduction

The recent strike by the air traffic controllers provides a current example of the potential cost of intraorganizational conflict between a union's rank-and-file and its leadership. How these situations arise and how they may be resolved are questions for further investigation. Studies on the leadership in unions shed limited information on this area. This paper examines this question by presenting a theoretical model of the structural and attitudinal elements of the teachers union's intraorganizational processes and linking this model to how union members perceive the effectiveness of their leadership as the result of collective bargaining.

Intraorganizational Governance: A Review of the Literature

Workers want unions to represent their interest in the work place and are willing to accept centralized control on the implicit assumption that these interests can be realized most efficiently this way. Democracy is among the most prominent issues in the private sector literature concerning the internal processes of unions. Cook (1963), Edelstein & Warner (1975), and Tannenbaum & Kahn (1957) discuss democracy in terms of the variables control and organizational structure: how control is

distributed in the formal organization. Membership participation is suggested by these authors as the means by which control of the organization can be influenced by the rank-and-file. On the other hand, Michels (1962) postulated an implacable tendency toward oligarchy in an organization which he attributed partly to the members and partly to the leaders. Members contribute to oligarchy through their "incompetence", apathy, and desire for strong leadership. The leadership creates and maintains the oligarchy, since they have inside knowledge of the organization, political skill, and they are able, by virtue of their position, to control much of the formal means of communications. A third perspective is that the membership is neither committed to an ideology for their union or to the abstract notion of democracy but rather they are interested in the functions of the union (Lipset, Trow & Coleman, 1956; Lawler & Levin, 1968; Miller & Rosen, 1957; and Warner, 1974).

The relationship between the leader and union members should be both fiduciary and representative in nature (Barbash, 1956; Lipset, Trow & Coleman, 1956; and Sayles & Strauss, 1967). These authors argue that to the rank-and-file, the leaders are the union. Therefore, the union leadership should be sensitive to the nature of the various interests within the union. This political sensitivity should be accomplished by allowing the members to participate in decision-making process, the disciplinary process, and the election process of the union. At the same time, the

leadership must recognize that the primary function of the union is to represent the membership outside the organization in the work place and at the bargaining table with management. The issue, then, is what tensions are produced in this relationship as the result of these dual expectations. The reponsiveness of the leadership towards fiduciary matters as opposed to collective bargaining matters, the access to versus the influence in the decision-making process, and whether the members should or should not participate may create tensions.

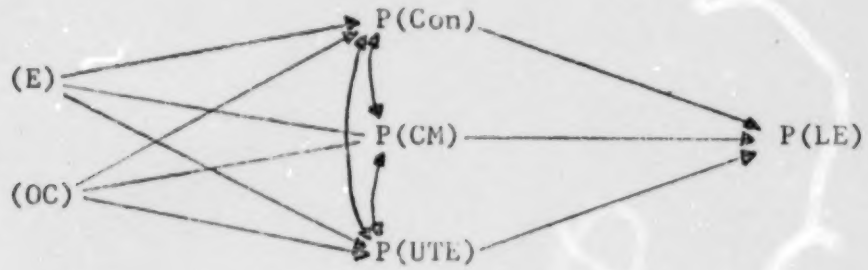
The public sector labor relations literature reflects the private sector approach in examining the internal relationships of the unions. Juris & Feiulle (1973), Lowe (1965), and Rosenthal (1966) suggest factors similar to the private sector for why public employees join unions. Glassman & Belasco (1975) argue that public sector employees are similar to their private sector counterparts in that they are concerned more with employee organization representation of their interests than abstract concepts of professionalism or democracy. A similar perspective presented by Donaldson & Warner (1974) concludes that the organizational structures of both public and private sector employee organizations are similar and thereby have the same influence on its members. Finally, Juris & Feiulle (1973), Cole (1969), Corwin (1970), and Allutto & Belasco (1974) examine the seemingly contradictory attitudes of militancy and professionalism. They conclude that the rank-and-file can

behave militantly while at the same time perceiving no loss of professionalism by their actions.

Although these perspectives provide an understanding of intraorganizational process, they do not identify the specific influences which effect the relationships between the leaders and members. Union leaders, in most cases, are elected, and removal from office is likely to represent a very profound dislocation in their lives. They are, therefore, under great pressure to devise means to protect their postions. These studies fail to indicate the strategies used by the leadership to manipulate the attitudes and perceptions of their members. Only McKersie, Perry & Walton's (1965) study of the UAW provides some insight into the strategies for the resolution of intraorganizational conflict. However, this study only deals with resolving conflicts over bargaining goals. It fails to examine the member - leader relationship in the organization away from the union-management bargaining process. It also fails to suggest whether the fiduciary or collective bargaining representation is more important to the union membership. Finally, each study only indicates several possible factors which could influence perceptions of leadership effectiveness. No study has directly investigated how the presence of all these factors might influence perceived leadership effectivess. In summary, one does not know from the intraorganizational labor relations literature what influences leadership effectiveness or how these variables interrelate.

Model of Local Teacher Union Intraorganizational Relationships

The relationship of those variables which are posited to influence teacher union members' perceptions of leadership effectiveness are as follows:



where

E = Environment of Local Teacher Organization

OC = Organizational Characteristics

P(Con) = Perceptions of the Contract

P(CM) = Perception of Conflict Management

P(UTE) = Perceptions of Union Tactical Effectiveness

P(LE) = Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness

and the arrow represents causal direction.[1]

The proposed intraorganizational model is composed of exogenous and endogenous variables. The exogenous variables, environment and organizational characteristics, are seen as the parameters within which the perceptions of the rank-and-file are formed. The endogenous variables rank-and-file's perceptions of conflict management, rank-and-file's perceptions of the negotiated contract, and rank-and-file's perceptions of union tactical effectiveness, are shown as simultaneously influencing the member's perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

Exogenous Variables

There are three organizational characteristics of interest in this model. Tannenbaum & Kahn (1958), Donaldson & Warner (1974), and Edelstein & Warner (1975) argued that there is a control structure present in each union. This control structure determines the degree of formal power and formal control of decision-making the leadership has in the union. Participation, as suggested by Seidman (1970), Cook (1963), and Rogow (1966), is the entry of the membership into organizational roles and the expenditures of individual energies in the performance of these activities. It should be noted that the control structure and member participation must be separated. Because the union is controlled by the leadership, participation in union activities has meaning for the organizational characteristic only to the

degree it involves decision-making. More attendance in meetings or involvement on union committees may not be important to the organization. Finally, the homogeneity of the union, the number of classifications of personnel with membership in the union, would appear to be important. Chamberlain & Cullen (1965) and Walton & McKersie (1965) argue that the presence of many job title classifications impart on the organization. The special interests of each job title group creates additional tensions on both the present leaders and union structure by competing for the same positions and formal power. Therefore, it is suggested that the organizational characteristics provide the formal structure within which membership perceptions about their leaders' effectiveness are formed.

The second exogenous variable, the environment, is composed of economic, political, and demographic considerations. Kasper (1970), Landon & Baird (1971), Hall & Carrol (1973), and Lipsky & Drotning (1973) suggest that the economic variables should include the employer's ability to pay, the demand for services, the demand for labor, and the amount of unemployment in the local labor market. These authors argue that, since the union's primary mission is economic in nature, to exclude the economic situation in which the union function would be an error. Michels (1962), Anderson (1977), and Kochan & Wheeler (1975) argue that the political environment in which the union exists should also be accounted for. They suggest that a proxy for this political

environment can be identified by determining the percentage of voters in local elections, if union-endorsed candidates win both school board and municipal elections, and if school tax referendums are passed. Finally, demographic characteristics should be included. Anderson (1977), Allutto & Belasco (1974), and Kochan (1975) indicate that age, sex, experience, grade level assignment, and account of education of the membership should be included. In summary, it is proposed that the union organizational characteristics and the environment establish the parameters within which the perceptions concerning the relationships, performance of tasks, and outcomes of the union are formed.

Endogenous Variables

This model proposes that rank-and-file perceptions of conflict management directly influences the perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Rank-and-file perceptions of conflict management can be broken down into three components: the presence of conflict within the local union, the tactics used by the leadership for conflict resolutions; and the usage of power by the leadership. Thomas (1971), Boulding (1957), Lawler & Levin (1968), and Michels (1962) suggest several concepts concerning the presence of conflict that should be included. They argue that the presence of differing goals of the membership and leadership,

factions in the membership, contested union elections, and attitudes concerning professionalism versus unionism reveal potential conflict. French & Raven (1959), Katz (1964), Cartwright (1965), and Thomas (1971) suggest ways of resolving this organizational concept. They indicate the perceived tactics of the leadership for conflict resolution should include the use of additional member involvement, changing the organizational structure, the use of established rules and procedures, and, if necessary, coercion strategies. Finally, the leadership's usage of power as suggested by Michels (1962), Dahl (1957), March (1957), and Harsanyi (1962) influence the perception of leadership effectiveness. These authors argue that these perceptions are derived from the relationship of an individual member with the leader. Perceptions concerning this basic relationship include the personal acceptance by the member of the leadership, the communication patterns between teacher and member, the amount of legitimate authority, rewards granted by the leader, and the amount of expertise. In summary, it is proposed that the perceptions concerning the presence of conflict, how intraorganizational tensions are resolved, and the leaders' use of power influences the member's perception of leadership effectiveness.

Another influence on perceptions of leadership effectiveness should be the members' perceptions about the various functions the union performs for its membership. It can be argued that

the leadership is the union to the individual member. This model proposes that the members' perceptions of union tactical effectiveness influences perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Union tactical effectiveness can be defined as the effectiveness of the union in grievance processing, in joint union-management commi tees, in union political action, and in bargaining tactics away from the table. Anderson (1977), Miller & Ross (1957), Fleishman & Harris (1962), and Glassman & Belasco (1975) suggest that perceptions of grievance processing should include taking every complaint as a grievance, handling complaints quickly, treating all members alike, and processing grievances through all steps of the grievance procedure. Dyer & Kochan (1976), Shaw (1950), Warner (1974) studies of joint union-management committees suggest that this is an important function of the union. Perceptions of these committees' effectiveness should include what topics are discussed and are the recommendations of the committee adopted as policy. Political action is another increasingly important function of the union. Concepts from Masters (1962), Marmo (1975), Yaffe (1973), and Hudson & Rosen (1954) suggest that the effectiveness of the union through political action should include the involvement of the local union in elections (state and local), in influencing legislation, and in influencing political leaders. Finally, Chamberlain & Cullen (1965), Block (1980), and Anderson (1979) suggest that union bargaining tactics away from the table be included. They indicate that work slowdowns,

picketing, and representing the union position at city council and Board of Education meetings are an integral part of the union's function and therefore should be included in any study of a union's internal process.

Chamberlain & Cullen (1965) and Dunlop (1953) argue that the rank-and-file's perceptions of the contract should also be included. They suggest that the most important function the union leadership provides is securing a contract through negotiations. Tannenbaum (1965) indicates that a union is an organization designed to protect and enhance the economic welfare of their members by formalizing its relationship with management in a comprehensive, written document. Wildman & Lifton (1975) propose that certain provisions are more important to the union. It can be argued that these provisions should be equally important to the individual member. Accordingly, an individual member should perceive how favorable these clauses are for the union including the grievance procedure, teacher responsibility clauses, recognition and dues check-off provisions, union security provisions, negotiation procedures, and salaries and fringe benefit provisions.

The process of leadership has been examined from many different perspectives. The literature concerning leadership has viewed it as a focus of the group process, the result of personality, the art of inducing compliance, the exercises of influence, the act of behavior, the user of persuasion, the

instrument of goal achievement, the effect of interaction of a group, the unique and differentiated role, and the interaction and maintenance of the role structure. Tannenbaum, Weschler & Mossark (1961) suggest one such definition of the process of leadership as the "interpersonal influence, exercised in situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals." Stogdill (1974) reasons that the role, position, reinforcement of behavior, and structuring expectations would serve the purpose of differentiating and explaining the leadership process. It appears that the process of leadership remains fairly elusive in its conceptualization. The concept of leadership effectiveness is defined here as the perception of how effective the leadership is at whatever task or behavior the leader is involved in. Bass (1955), Fiedler (1967), and Halprin's (1957) works suggest that rank-and-file's perceptions of the leader's bargaining expertise (task), the accessibility of the leadership to the rank-and-file, the trustworthiness of the leadership, and the amount of self-interest displayed by the leadership should be included.

Conclusion

It is increasingly evident that teachers, through their unions and the bargaining process, are becoming more involved in the every day decision-making process and policy development of school districts. A better understanding of what influences rank-and-file's perception of leadership effectiveness may provide insight into what influences this decision-making process. Accordingly, this paper proposes that the perceptions by the membership of the conflict management by the leadership, of the contract, and of the union tactical effectiveness established within the setting of the organizational characteristic and the local school district influence their perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

Footnotes

1. For a more detailed explanation of structural models and the meaning of the arrows, see G. Hilton Intermediate Politometrics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

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